

Book Reviews

Familial Breast and Ovarian Cancer: Genetics, Screening and Management. Patrick J Morrison, Shirley V Hodgson, Neva E Haites. Published November 2002. ISBN 0 521 80373 X (hardback). £65.

This text book is a timely publication and it gives a splendid overview of the genetics and management of familial breast and ovarian cancer. The book is edited by Professor Morrison and his colleagues and they have drawn together a national and an international list of contributors well respected in their fields. The book begins with a series of book chapters on molecular biology of these tumours.

There then follows a further six chapters discussing screening for breast and ovarian cancer. Herein are a number of very important and up to date guidelines.

The final eight chapters discuss the management for patients with these difficult familial problems. The latter two chapters give a glimpse into the future discussing new therapies including gene therapy.

The book is well written in a uniform style despite the number of contributors. The two familial tumours are discussed in great detail and the chapters on management are practical, up to date and well referenced.

This book will be of interest to a wide range of specialists who are involved in managing these patients who require careful counselling. Colleagues managing patients with these cancers and their families will find this book to be of great benefit including nurses, counsellors, psychologists, surgeons, gynaecologists and geneticists.

The latter two sections of book will also be of interest to family doctors. The contributors, editors and indeed publishers are to be praised for their rapid speed of writing and subsequent publication. The references are up to date, timely and appropriate. The references are mostly 1990's up to the year 2000 with a sprinkling here and there of 2001 references, despite the publication date of the book being 2002.

This book will require a new edition within two years in such a rapidly changing field. Two small suggestions which may help the next edition would be either a chapter, or alternatively an appendix describing some of the more technical genetic phrases and their meaning. This would widen the scope and the readership of this book.

A second helpful chapter or an appendix would contain an up to date listing of what genetic tests are available for the various cancers and how widely they are available (ie generally available or only as a research tool) and some idea of their costs.

These are relatively minor points which the editors may wish to take on board for the next edition. I can recommend this book thoroughly to colleagues looking after patients with breast or ovarian cancer and their families.

Colleagues throughout the profession from a wide range of disciplines will find much in this book to interest them and will help them guide and manage their patients through the difficult decision journey of familial cancer

R A J SPENCE.

Gastrointestinal Emergencies. Tony CK Tham and John SA Collins. BMJ Books. ISBN 0-7279-1485-5.
www.bmjbooks.com

The authors pitch this compact book at those practitioners who have no specialty training in gastroenterology but may nonetheless be faced with gastrointestinal emergencies. It is essentially a reference source for emergency management pending the early attention of a GI surgeon or physician. The book is divided into three sections, approaching in turn presenting symptoms, organ-specific conditions, and complications of GI procedures. The last in particular should be compulsory reading for all those, junior and senior, who request an ERCP with the same nonchalance that they might an ESR. Most PEG tube complications will present themselves in units outside gastroenterology, and there is a useful chapter on the subject here.

Specialists may nitpick details but there is little to criticise. In the interim between the authors' final draft and publication, MRI cholangiography has rapidly progressed from its "as yet undefined" role to rendering the diagnostic ERCP virtually obsolete, and no doubt will gain more detailed appraisal in the next edition. The statement that barium swallow is the preferred initial diagnostic test for dysphagia is outdated: the early OGD for the patient with dysphagia is safe, potentially therapeutic, and one of the few situations where the upper GI endoscopist approaches the procedure without a sense of impending futility.

This book provides clear and succinct advice and should be made readily available to those working on general medical and surgical units.

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